

Turkey Deep Fat Fryers

Ensuring the safe use of deep fat fryers for turkeys.

The NFPA (National Fire Protection Association), a century-old, international nonprofit safety advocate, urges consumers not to use turkey fryers when preparing holiday meals because of the dangers frequently associated with the devices. Tests have shown that the fryers have a high risk of tipping over, overheating, or spilling hot oil, leading to fires, burns, or other injuries.

The cooking method, which has become increasingly popular in recent years, requires placing the turkey in three gallons or more of oil, heated by propane. The units came under scrutiny when Underwriters Laboratories, Inc., an independent product safety-testing organization, decided not to certify, with their UL mark, any turkey fryer.

State Fire Marshal Samuel Pierre states “The process of deep frying a turkey requires preparation and precaution. The instructions provided with the cooking-pot should be read carefully before attempting to deep-fry a turkey. This is critical in order to prevent a serious fire or burn injury.”

If you choose to use a turkey fryer, the National Turkey Federation and the Turkey Information Exchange offer these safety tips:

1

Prepare in advance, and use proper equipment

- Use a specially designed outdoor cooker/deep fryer with a perforated basket insert. The cooking pot should be a 10-gallon or more capacity unit that stands three feet high and is hooked up to a propane gas cylinder. The propane cylinder must be separated by a minimum of 2-feet from the fryer. Remember it is important to read and follow the manufacturer’s directions and safety instructions that come with the cooker.
- Place the fryer on a flat and level surface.
- Be aware of your clothing around the hot oil, which can spatter, and the open flame, which could ignite clothing. Roll sleeves up and tuck away loose clothing.
- Be sure you are strong enough to lower the turkey into and lift it from 350-degree oil safely.

2

Keep heated items (hot oil and the propane cooker) way from anything that can burn.

- The entire area for at least 10-feet in all directions must be fireproof. Never deep-fry a turkey indoors, in garage, on a porch, on a deck, or in any other structure attached to a building.
- Keep children and pets away from the cooking area. Never leave the hot oil unattended.
- The deep-fryer unit should be positioned so any wind will direct the heat away from the gas cylinder, people, and structures.

3

Watch what you heat and cook.

- Deep fryers must all be attended during cooking. Never use a frozen turkey, the ice crystals can cause it to “explode” when it comes in contact with the hot oil.
- Oil should not be allowed to go over 350-degrees; oil can ignite at 375-degrees. Allow oil to cool completely before disposing or storing.
- Never cover the deep fryer, this could cause over heating, or boiling-over of the hot oil. **Should a fire start, clear all people from the area and call 911 immediately.**

References: National Fire Protection Association on line at www.nfpa.org; The National Turkey Federation, 1225 New York Avenue NW, Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20005, (202) 898-0100, <http://www.turkeyfed.org>; The Turkey Frying Information Exchange, The Cajun Shoppe, PO Box 168 Lake Charles, LA 70602, 1-800-434-280, <http://cajunshoppe.com/turkey/index.htm>